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SUBJECT: CAMEROON'S INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS TELL FOREST

MINISTER: "THE PROBLEM IS NOT MONEY, BUT WILL"

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¶1. (SBU) Summary. Cameroon's Forestry Minister (MINFOF) was caught off-guard when EU representatives responded to his August 22 appeal for donor assistance by suggesting that the Government of Cameroon's problem is "not money, but will." The ambassadors encouraged Ngolle to continue MINFOF's fight against corruption as a Government of Cameroon (GRC) initiative, which they asserted should be properly funded by the GRC itself. End summary.

¶2. (U) Cameroon's Minister of Forestry, Elvis Ngolle Ngolle, asked embassy representatives from the U.S., the Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy, the U.K. and Canada to attend an August 22 meeting to brief them on MINFOF activities and to appeal for participation, including funding, from international donors in an initiative to expand MINFOF efforts to fight corruption. Ngolle cited losses to the state of 50 billion CFA (approximately \$100 million) in illegal logging activities, and that he wanted to launch an independent study, with the support of Prime Minister Inoni, to be carried out by a six-member commission in partnership between MINFOF and donor countries.

¶3. (SBU) Ngolle was caught flat-footed, however, by the response from EU representatives, who were upset by MINFOF's request, as they saw it, for international partners to become involved in interministerial conflicts, particularly with the Ministry of Economy and Finances (MINEFI), which should be funding the project. The German ambassador summed up succinctly the prevailing view of donor countries at the table: "The problem is not money, but will." The diplomats encouraged Ngolle to continue MINFOF's fight against corruption in coordination with MINEFI and noted that further international assistance was not a precondition to this effort moving forward.

¶4. (SBU) Media reports skirted the response from the donor community. The state-run Cameroon Tribune and the Herald both reported that the EU would support the committee and stated that the donor countries had pledged to support forest governance efforts. In response to Poloff's follow-up request for clarification from MINFOF's Director of Wildlife, Mahamat Amine, who also attended the meeting, Amine said that the EU representatives said they were formulating a response

and would respond within the next few days.

¶15. (SBU) Comment: This is just one example of the GRC requesting funding for activities it can and should be carrying out on its own. Ngolle is generally considered one of the brighter stars in the government, as his efforts to combat corruption in this sector attest. The response from the EU representatives reflected a sense among many donors that the GRC remains stuck in a fundraising mentality despite recent windfalls to the treasury from debt relief and higher than anticipated oil revenues. End Comment.

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